

GROW YOUR OWN **VICTORY GARDEN**

PREPARE TO FEED YOURSELF WHEN
STORE SHELVES EMPTY AGAIN



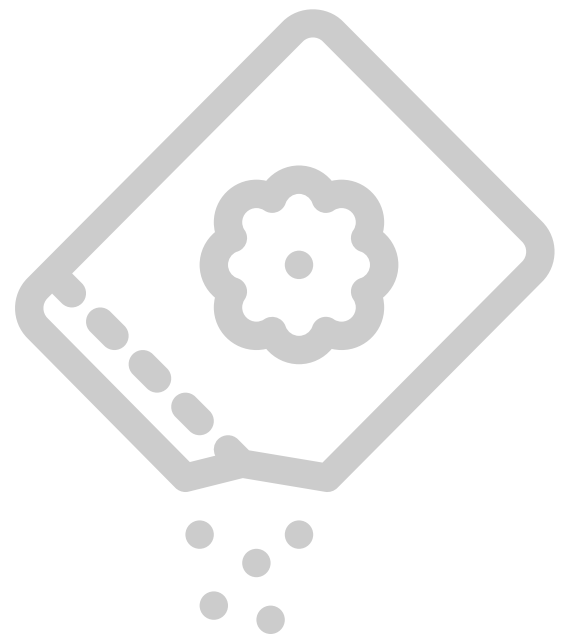
4 Patriots

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INTRODUCTION

Before 2020, we at 4Patriots frequently talked about the possibility of store shelves being stripped bare due to a disaster. And how we should prepare for that eventuality by stockpiling survival food and planting a garden to grow our own food.

Occasionally some of us did see empty store shelves. Especially in areas prone to extreme weather events such as hurricanes. But to be honest, most of us did not observe this happening in our neighborhood stores.

We still understood the importance of preparedness, but we rarely if ever had that stark reminder of food shortages and supply chain disruptions – in the form of empty shelves – staring us in the face.

And then it happened. The event that we didn't even realize we'd been preparing for all along.

The COVID-19 pandemic knocked us all for a loop.

Suddenly empty grocery store shelves many of us had only seen on our television and computer screens were waiting for us just a few blocks from our homes.

Of course, the pandemic is just one of the events that could cause you to have to find ways to care for your family without being able to buy what you need from the store. Extreme weather, wildfires, natural disasters and civil unrest are just a few other examples. We realize like never before the importance of becoming self-reliant.

During times like these, the basics are crucial. Providing food, water, warmth and shelter are the goals. One thing you can do to prepare for empty store shelves is to plant a survival garden. Imagine having fresh tomatoes, carrots, lettuce, broccoli, peppers, corn, cauliflower and more on your family's plates at mealtime... even if stores aren't selling them.

This guide offers tips about how to get started on a survival garden and also explains the essential nature of such a step.

WHO NEEDS A SURVIVAL GARDEN?

The answer to this question is quite simple: anyone who eats. During a time of crisis, there may be assistance available – eventually – that can provide some basic food items such as rice or beans. The type of food that will be the hardest to come by will be fresh fruit and vegetables.



Obviously, you need a good supply of vegetables in order to consume the best possible diet. By having a survival garden as part of your emergency preparedness, you will be able to provide your family with fresh produce without having to rely on help from outside sources.

Of course, it's also important to build a stockpile of survival food with a long shelf life.

But a great way to augment that supply is with a survival garden that will provide you with an ongoing source of food.

Another benefit is that the food you grow, harvest and preserve should be much healthier than store-bought canned food. That's because you don't have to worry about all the salt and additives we find in food purchased at stores. Or how long the produce you see has been sitting around. The longer food sits on a shelf, the less nutritional value it will possess.

A survival garden is one way to make sure your family will be cared for during various types of emergency situations. If you start your garden now, you can eat some of each harvest, and store some for emergencies.

WHEN YOU MIGHT NEED IT

There are a number of situations that could cause fresh vegetables to be in short supply or make it difficult for you to obtain them. Some examples are below:

- **Flooding** – Flooding can wreak havoc on crops, pushing prices up and leaving grocers with less than their usual supply.
- **E. coli or other outbreaks** – When local and national food contaminations take place, not only can you not buy that particular food, but trust in similar foods is on the top of your mind.
- **Pandemic** – As we saw firsthand in 2020, minimizing our contact with the public gives us a better chance of staying healthy. By having a garden and a good supply of emergency food stored, it's possible to wait out a pandemic or epidemic, without making trips to the store.

- **Civil unrest or war** – We’ve seen a lot of this in our country over the past few years. But even when it occurs in other countries, it can cause a shortage of some types of food by disrupting transportation channels.

As you can see, there are many good reasons to consider developing an emergency food storage supply and starting a survival garden. Doing so is easier than you might think. One of the biggest mistakes many people make when it comes to survival gardens and other types of emergency preparedness is procrastination.

Some think a disaster will never touch their lives. Others know it is possible, but are pretty sure it won’t happen tomorrow. Therefore, they put off taking the steps that could potentially be the difference between life and death.

The time to start your emergency preparedness planning is TODAY. Start today and before you know it, you will have built an emergency stockpile and a plan that can help your family survive.

just need a very rudimentary understanding of the process to get started. Check a book out of the library, do some online research or visit a local garden center, many of which offer low-cost gardening classes.

INDOOR GARDENS

Many people associate gardens with the outdoors. But when it comes to a survival garden, keeping it indoors might be a better option for some people. With proper lighting, an indoor garden can often grow more food in a shorter amount of time than a standard outdoor garden can.



GETTING STARTED

OBSTACLES

- **Lack of Space** – This is one of the most common reasons people give for why they cannot start a garden. But the fact is, you don’t need that much space. Whether you choose to garden indoors or outdoors, you only need a small space.
- **No Gardening Experience** – For those who have never grown their own food, gardening can seem complicated and intimidating. It’s not difficult, and you

REASONS TO KEEP YOUR GARDEN INDOORS

- **Control** – When your garden is indoors, you can keep control of the garden rather than being at the mercy of variables outside of your control, such as...
- **Weather** – Flooding, tornadoes, hurricanes and frost are examples of weather that could destroy your gardening efforts.
- **Pests** – An indoor garden is far less susceptible to bugs, rodents and other pests such as squirrels and rabbits.

- **Theft** – One of the most important reasons to consider keeping your survival garden indoors is to prevent theft. In a situation where food is scarce, people will be willing to do just about anything to eat. That includes raiding your garden. Ideally, no one will even know you have a survival garden. While it is possible to hide an outdoor garden, it is much easier to keep an indoor garden a secret and safe from those who would want to reap the benefits of your efforts.
- **Year-Round Gardening** – Another huge benefit of keeping your garden indoors is that you will not have to rely on weather patterns. Instead, you will be able to create a controlled climate and grow your choice of vegetables all year long.

If you want to garden outdoors, you can do that as well. But keep at least a portion of your survival garden indoors where you can have the control needed to get the most of your efforts in an emergency situation.

OUTDOOR GARDENS

If you want to have your survival garden outdoors, there are some things you will need to consider.

PESTS

Bugs are an issue for most gardeners. If pests destroy your survival garden, your hard work might have been in vain. More importantly, if you lose this source of food and an emergency takes place, your family could suffer.

Keep in mind that if you are in an emergency situation, you may not have access to the products needed to keep your garden free of pests. For that reason, you should keep supplies on hand you may need in the future.

ANIMALS

Animals are another threat to your garden that you will need to deal with should you choose an outdoor garden. Deer, rabbits and other animals can consume your efforts in a very short period of time. You will need to install some sort of fencing or electronic deterrent to keep your garden safe.

WEATHER

When you have your survival garden indoors, you can grow what you want when you want. When you have an outdoor garden you are at the mercy of the weather. Some parts of the country have very short growing periods.

If you choose to have an outdoor garden, you will need to become familiar with the growing seasons in your area. Depending on where you live, there could be some vegetables that you will not be able to grow at all.

CONTAINER GARDENS

If you want to keep your garden outdoors, one option is to start a container garden. Rather than planting in the ground, instead you grow your vegetables in containers filled with nutrient-rich soil. Some benefits include:



- No need to work the soil. You just fill the container with high quality soil and you're ready to go.
- Depending on the type of containers you choose, it may be possible to move your garden if necessary.
- During bad weather, you can protect your garden by moving plants indoors.
- You can choose the size of container. Such as small pots or large trays. To make it easier to move larger containers, you can add wheels.
- Novice gardeners often find it easier to start with container gardens, as the plants are easier to care for and control.

TIPS FOR KEEPING IT HIDDEN

The above factors are an issue for all outdoor gardeners. There is another factor, however, that comes into play when you are dealing with a survival garden: how to keep it hidden. As mentioned above, when people are hungry there is nothing they won't do to feed their families. That is why you will need to take steps to keep your outdoor garden hidden as much as possible.

- **Don't talk about it** – The first step in protecting your garden is to not talk about it. When you tell people you have a survival garden, you are inviting problems should an emergency arise. They will know where to go to find food and, when they are hungry, will have no problem paying you a visit.
- **Disguise the fencing** – Fencing is an obvious telltale sign of a garden. Try to disguise the fencing by planting bushes around it.

- **Off the road** – Try to find a spot for your garden that cannot be seen from the road. For some, this might not be possible, but give it your best shot.

The point of your garden is to make sure your family has what they need. But there's no reason you cannot share your bounty when a time of emergency comes around. You will always have that option. But by limiting the number of people you tell about the garden, you will keep complete control over your food and will be able to share it as you see fit when the time comes.

HYDROPONICS AND AQUAPONICS

Many have realized the advantages of utilizing hydroponics when growing their survival gardens. Hydroponics is a system of gardening that eliminates the need for soil. Vegetables are instead grown in nutrient-rich water. There are many benefits to using hydroponics.



- With no need for soil, the cost of gardening is lowered.
- It is much easier to control pests and disease.
- It is simpler to maintain proper nutrition levels.

- The water is reused, lowering the costs even more.
- No gases are released.

Some choose to add aquaponics to their hydroponic gardening system. Aquaponics is the use of aquatic animals (such as fish) to produce nutrients for the garden. Below is a short explanation of how such a system works.

- Aquatic animals are kept in tanks of water.
- A system is put in place to catch biological matter.
- A biofilter converts the matter into nutrients that are helpful for the plants.

The entire aquaponics system rests below the hydroponic system to which the nutrients are channeled.



With a successful aquaponics and hydroponic gardening system in place, you can achieve these goals:

- Lower the cost of gardening.
- Reap a healthy harvest.
- Grow more food in less time.

- Have control over where you place your garden (i.e. open sheds, back porch, basement with lights, etc.).

When you use these systems, you eliminate the cost of soil and nutrients, and cut down on the amount of needed water. When planting a survival garden, cost is an issue for many. While there is some upfront cost to set up these systems, the expenses over the long term will be greatly reduced.

DEALING WITH DEAD SOIL

Unless you choose to use hydroponics for your gardening, you will need healthy soil. One of the main reasons gardens fail to thrive is that the soil is not full of the required nutrients. If you are dealing with dead soil, it is possible to turn that hard, useless dirt into a fertile breeding ground for your garden.

The best way to revitalize dead soil is by adding organic matter to it. When properly done, this can easily change useless soil into very healthy soil. Below are steps to follow to properly add organic matter to your soil:

- Churn up the soil, going to a depth of between six and eight inches.
- Break up the soil and turn it.
- Add about four to six inches of organic matter such as peat moss or compost. You can purchase organic matter from a nursery or gardening center, or you can make your own compost.
- After adding the organic material, turn and chop the soil until the old soil and the organic matter are well blended.

A very common mistake made by those trying to revitalize soil is they only add a thin layer

of organic matter. The problem with that is an inch or two of organic matter is not enough to change the composition of soil.



A general rule is to create a mix close to 50 percent of the old soil and 50 percent of the organic matter. If you do this properly, you will be surprised at the beautiful soil that can be created from dry, dead soil.

GRAY WATER TIPS

Using gray water in your survival garden is one way to reduce the amount of needed fresh water, which could be important during an emergency situation. Gray water is water left over from other uses, which does NOT include toilet water or any other type of water likely to contain fecal matter or other waste from humans or animals.



It is also important to note that not all gray water is the same. Some is better for use in gardening than others. So if you have a choice, use gray water from these sources in the following order:

1. Showers or tubs
2. Bathroom sink
3. Washing machine
4. Kitchen sink
5. Dishwasher

In general, the gray water from showers or tubs is less likely to contain potentially harmful material than gray water from a dishwasher. There are other things to keep in mind if you plan to use gray water in your garden. Below are some of the most important tips.

- Fresh water is better than gray water. If it is feasible to use fresh water for gardens that include food items, that is the best choice. In this case, it is still fine to use gray water for plants that are strictly ornamental in nature.
- When using gray water for vegetable gardens, make every effort to rotate between fresh water and gray water, rather than using gray water every time you water your garden.
- Never use gray water on seedlings or young plants. These immature plants may not be able to withstand gray water and damage can result.
- When using gray water, do not pour it onto a small area. Instead, apply it to a broad area.
- Try to apply gray water only to areas that will not result in runoff.

- If you wash diapers in the washing machine, do not use that gray water in your garden.
- Be sure to test the pH levels in your soil. If you notice a buildup of salt, reduce the amount of gray water you are using.

The use of gray water is a great way to reserve more of your fresh water for drinking and other purposes. But be sure to apply gray water properly to avoid damage to your garden.

GATHERING AND STORING

If you have a proper survival garden, you will need to learn some methods of gathering and storing food. Below are three of the most popular methods.

CANNING

Canning is one of the best ways to store produce from your garden. The reason this method is preferred is it is easy, inexpensive, healthy and, unlike freezing, does not require electricity for food to remain edible.



If you have never canned vegetables before, consider taking a class at your local farmer's market or nursery center. You can also find most of the information you need online.

Many people are surprised to learn how simple it is to can produce. Below is a very general outline of the steps.

1. Gather produce and plan to can it right away. The longer fresh produce sits, the more nutrients are lost. Ideally, you will can vegetables the same day you gather them.
2. Sterilize jars and lids.
3. Chop produce and fill the jars. Do not fill jars to the top. The produce will expand during the canning process, so leave room for that.
4. Pour in enough boiling water to completely cover the vegetables.
5. Use a clean cloth to remove any excess moisture from the exterior of the jars and put a lid over the mouth of each jar.
6. Preheat water in a large pan or pressure cooker. The desired temperature will vary based on the type of produce being canned.
7. Place the jars in water.
8. Remove the jars and place on an even surface. Allow jars to cool for about a day.

The cooling process will cause a seal to form. This seal will keep out air and preserve the vegetables until you are ready to enjoy them. If canned properly, the produce will be good for more than a year.

FREEZING

Freezing is a very simple option for storing your vegetables.

- After gathering your veggies, wash them thoroughly and allow to dry completely.
- Cut the vegetables however you like.
- Place in freezer bags and remove as much air as possible.
- Place bags in freezer.



If the temperature in the freezer remains at least 0° F, the vegetables will be good indefinitely. However, there are some obvious problems with storing food in a freezer for survival reasons.

In general, gray water from showers or tubs is less likely to contain potentially harmful material than gray water from a dishwasher. There are some other things to keep in mind if you plan to use gray water in your garden. Below are some of the most important tips.

- **Power outage** – If you store much of your emergency food in the freezer and the power goes out, you're in trouble. Even if you have a backup generator, it may not be possible to keep the generator operational for the long term.
- **Evacuation** – Should you need to evacuate, it will be much easier to bring along canned vegetables than frozen goods.

It's fine to freeze some produce for your own short-term use. But for survival purposes, choose another method for storing items.

PICKLING

The process of pickling is similar to canning. The difference is that you use brine instead of water. There are many recipes for brine. Some create a sweet taste, others sour. It is fun to experiment with brine to find which recipe works best for each type of vegetable.

Just as there are many brine recipes, there are also several methods of canning. Some create a product that will last for about a month. Others will be good for years.

If you have never done any pickling, you can find instructions online or sign up for a class at a farmer's market. For many people, pickled food can be a comfort food during an emergency situation.

Because they are easy to make and store so well, pickled items are a wonderful way to utilize some of the items from your survival garden.



LONG-TERM STORAGE SEEDS

Long-term storage seeds are an important part of any survival garden. Some think these

seeds are only for those who do not already have a thriving garden, but that is not the case. Imagine if you did have a healthy garden, but then a manmade or natural disaster destroyed it. You might be in the same boat as those who never started a survival garden.

While your garden would be destroyed, if you had long-term storage seeds on hand, you would be able to start again. Had you relied only on your already thriving garden for food and seeds for the next crop, you would be in trouble.

Long-term storage seeds can be purchased from preparedness web sites. Some garden sites may also have a small selection of these seeds.

As is the case with all emergency preparedness planning, it is about thinking of what could go wrong and then trying to put a plan in place to deal with each contingency. A survival garden is a layer of protection.

Keeping survival seeds on hand is another layer. In the end, the more layers of protection you have, the better off you will be when an actual emergency occurs.

USING WHAT YOU GROW

There is no doubt a survival garden is a good idea. If you are serious about emergency preparedness, this should be part of your overall plan. If you have not gardened before, you might make a mistake common to some emergency plans: not using what you grow and store.

You should can or otherwise preserve a good portion of each harvest. But you should also use some of what you grow. Even though canned goods will last a year or more, you

should rotate the items rather than keeping every can for an emergency.

One reason for this is that you should get used to using all the items in your emergency supplies. Also, if you continue to stockpile for 20 years, much of your food could go to waste.

Practice incorporating your self-canned goods with other items you keep in your stockpile. Have practice drills where you only eat from your emergency supplies for a set period of time. This will also ensure that you are comfortable with using the items you keep, should you have no other option at some point.

A FAMILY AFFAIR

Make your survival garden a family affair. Start teaching your children when they are young the importance of self-reliance. This is a seed you can plant in your children that will benefit them for the rest of their lives.



Aside from that, making your survival garden a family project is a way to bring the family together to do something that doesn't involve a television, computer or cellphone screen.

Finally, studies show that children are more likely to eat vegetables if they help grow them.

If you have a fussy eater, this may be one way to get him or her to eat healthier foods.

Even if you have never planted a seed before, a survival garden is a project you can start this weekend that could make a huge positive impact on your family. If money is an issue, start a simple garden for a small investment.

Many people think disasters only happen to others. While you can hope and pray that a serious disaster does not touch your life, it is still a good idea to plan for the worst. A survival garden is one part of your overall survival preparedness, but it is an important one.

The long-term sustainability of such a garden makes it a “must have” for anyone who is serious about survival planning.



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